

preservation issues

NEWS FOR THE PRESERVATION COMMUNITY

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

★ Volume 5 Number 2 ★

The Capitol of the Women of America

University City's City Hall visually dominates the group of buildings clustering around the spacious intersection of Delmar Boulevard and Trinity Avenue in University City. They constitute one of the most remarkable civic centers in the country, an embodiment of the City Beautiful movement that was inspired by the great world's fairs. The Civic Plaza, as it is known, is also a reminder of the vision of University City's colorful founder, E.G. Lewis; it is associated with the women's movement in the years preceding the passage of the 19th Amendment and is a model of adaptive reuse, as most of the buildings have been converted to new functions.

The City Hall embodies all of these themes. An octagonal building 80 feet in diameter, its five tall stories rise 135 feet to a copper-clad dome. It was built in 1903 to be the headquarters of the Lewis Publishing Company. **The Woman's Magazine**, the company's most successful publication, rivaled the **Ladies Home Journal** with a circulation of well over a million copies a month. The unusual design by Herbert C. Chivers (1869-1946) made the Magazine Building, as it was originally called, an advertisement not only for Lewis publications but also for the adjacent residential development he was promoting.

Lewis had observed how St. Louis was moving westward, and he calculated that this ground, the highest point in the western corridor, would attract upper-class home buyers. His University Heights Subdivision Number One was an innovative development, a private place like the fashionable enclaves in St. Louis



One of a series of female figures that decorate the fifth floor ballroom of the Magazine Building. Now the City Hall of University City.

Robert Pettus

but offering building sites to a range of incomes. Minimum construction costs were part of the deed restrictions, with the most expensive near the top of the hill on Delmar and Princeton and the most modest at the bottom on Dartmouth. The streets were all named for Ivy League and Seven Sisters colleges with the exception of Trinity, named for Lewis's alma mater in Hartford, Connecticut. "U. Heights One" was listed on the National Register in 1980. The City Hall is part of the private subdivision and must conform to its regulations even today.

Several of the houses in U. Heights One were designed by Chivers, a native of England who came to St. Louis in 1893. A self-promoter rivaling Lewis himself, Chivers published a volume of over a thousand designs, called **Artistic Homes**. In true Beaux-Arts fashion, he integrated painting and sculpture into the Magazine Building. Flanking the entrances were

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March/April 1995

FY '96 Grant Priorities: PUBLIC COMMENTS REQUESTED

Each year our federal partner, the National Park Service, requires that the Historic Preservation Program prepare an annual work program. Preparation of the fiscal year 1996 work program is currently under way. To assist us in ensuring that your preservation needs are met, we encourage your comments, on Missouri's statewide preservation needs and priorities for the selection and funding of Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) subgrants.

In Missouri, decisions regarding preservation needs and priorities are based on a comprehensive planning process, a continually evolving approach based on analysis of the cultural resource database and consideration of input from the public and private sector. Guided by the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation," the planning process is based on a methodical, sequential approach to preservation: identification, evaluation, registration and protection.

The first step, identification, concerns documentation of Missouri's cultural resources and incorporation of that data into the statewide inventory. This information forms the foundation of our preservation effort, the cultural resource database. Compiled primarily through our ongoing state survey, this data assists state and local governments and private organizations and individuals in decision-making by providing sufficient information for evaluating resources and developing strategies for long-term preservation.

The second step, evaluation, is a logical outgrowth of the identification phase. Identified resources are evaluated in terms of their local, state, or national historic context, and recommendations are made as to which resources merit nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The registration phase involves the preparation of nominations of evaluated resources to the National Register.

The final phase in the preservation sequence is protection. The extent, location, and significance of identified

resources are analyzed and plans are developed for their long-term protection.

For fiscal year 1996, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has identified projects that conform to the above planning sequence, with specific priorities as follows:

Survey Priorities

This includes architectural or archaeological survey and survey plans.

- Surveys in areas representing data gaps in Missouri's cultural resource database (i.e., areas or properties not previously surveyed or surveyed at an inadequate level).
- Surveys of unidentified resources threatened by rapid development, destruction, neglect or age.
- Subsequent phases of successful surveys begun under a previous grant cycle.
- Surveys contributing to the development of successful surveys begun under a previous grant cycle.

Nomination Priorities

- Nominations of significant properties identified in previously completed surveys or properties that have been determined eligible through the eligibility assessment process.
- Nominations of eligible properties endangered by rapid development, destruction, neglect or age.
- Nominations of properties filling data gaps in Missouri's National Register listings (e.g., counties, themes or property types not adequately represented).

Protection Priorities

- Protective activities (development of historic district design guidelines, preservation workshops, newsletters, etc.) that are the final phase of successfully completed identification, evaluation and registration phases (i.e., survey and National Register nominations).

- Preservation education and awareness activities (brochures, newsletters, workshops, etc.) of a broad-based nature that have statewide or regional applicability.

Certified Local Government Priorities

- Projects to develop a preservation plan for integration into a city or county master plan and planning activities.
- Projects to assist in the implementation of a local historic preservation program within city or county government procedures.
- Projects that encourage networking and provide an opportunity for commissions to exchange pertinent information.
- Innovative projects that will serve as a statewide model or that will address a specific common preservation problem or topic.

SHPO Priorities

- Projects that provide maximum benefit in terms of federal apportionment.
- Reasonable distribution of funds between urban and rural areas.
- Distribution of available funds to the maximum number of applicants possible.

The SHPO is also considering earmarking a pool of grant monies for "pre-development" or "acquisition and development" activities. Such grants could be used for developing plans and specifications for a preservation project, or for carrying out critical work to stabilize or restore an endangered property.

The SHPO is interested in funding quality projects that meet the priorities outlined above. In addition, we are considering a special priority for public buildings. We welcome your comments on this and other priorities.

To share your ideas, contact Mark Miles, assistant director, at (314)751-7858. See the May/June edition of **Issues** for final grant priorities and application information.

MISSOURI Historic Architecture

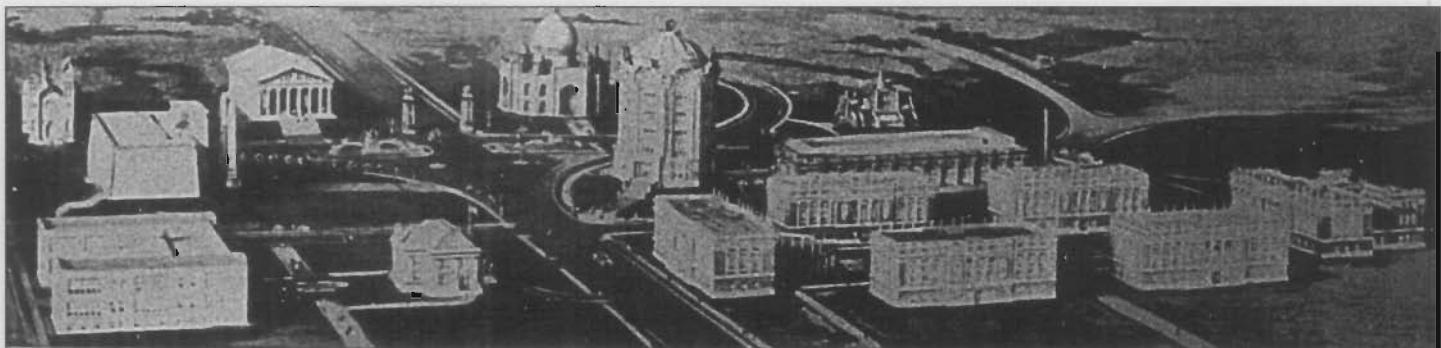
Beaux Arts Style Buildings 1885-1930

Characteristics:

- Buildings are often monumental public institutions or showplace residences expressing the tastes and values of America's industrial barons.
- Strict and sometimes elaborate symmetry is observed in the facade and usually in the internal planning, as taught by the Ecole des beaux-arts ("School of Fine Arts") in Paris, the influential French architectural school.
- Designs are based on classical, Renaissance, and Baroque precedent, especially of French origin, with more lavish ornamentation than in the more austere Classical Revival; buildings of this era derived from Italian Renaissance sources are sometimes classified as Second Renaissance Revival.
- The preferred building material is light-colored, smooth stone, often with the stonework joints of the first story exaggerated, a form often called rustication; buff brick is sometimes substituted.
- Where columns are used, they are often paired or coupled, a feature never found in neoclassical buildings.
- Architectural detailing includes elaborate moldings, dentils, modillions, quoins, pilasters, and balustrades, highlighted by facades broken into advancing and receding planes.
- Ornamentation often includes garlands, floral patterns, and shields or escutcheons, as well as specially commissioned works by sculptors and painters.



The Albert M. Keller House is located in Carrswold, a National Register-listed private place. Its 1929 design by leading society architects Maritz & Young follows the French sources of the Beaux Arts except in its asymmetry. See it, along with other Beaux Arts buildings, at "Signs of the Times," April 21-23, in Clayton.



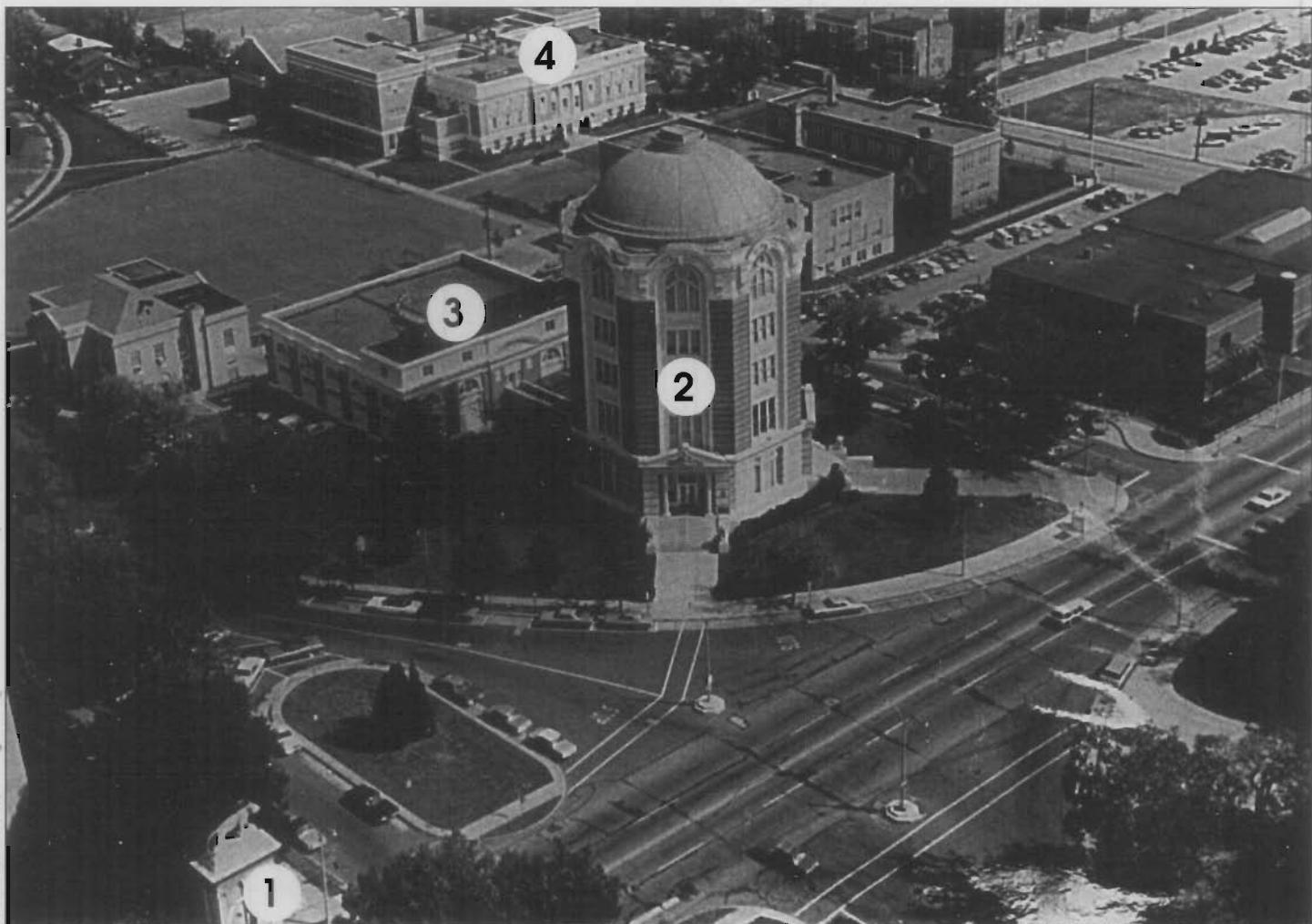
Complete model of University City Plaza, showing institutions and buildings projected by Lewis. This comprises his ideal conception of the central group of the "City Beautiful" as the capitol of the women in America. Five of these buildings, i.e., the homes of *The Woman's Magazine*, and of the *Woman's National Daily*, the Magazine Press Building, the Art Academy of the People's University and the City Hall of University City were built.

Continued from page 1

recumbent lions by sculptor William Bailey (1857-1922) and perched above the arched top windows were pairs of cherubs, each over 10 feet high and weighing more than two tons. These chubby boys were removed in 1945, but the rest of the building remains nearly unaltered.

The marble and scagliola lobby centers on a curving staircase flanked by Bailey's sculptures of lithe maidens holding torchères. Ceiling murals by Ralph Chesley Ott (1875-1931) depict aspects of E. G. Lewis's life and character (as he saw it) in highly allegorical form: seller (with a laboratory flask), artist (paintbrush), idler (referring to his condition on arrival in St.

Louis), publisher (printing press), and inventor (magnifying glass and tape). Other murals on the second floor are believed to represent the arts. Ott was a native of Springfield, MO. Although best known as a portrait painter, he also created murals for the St. Louis City Hall and the State Capitol in Jefferson City.



Civic Plaza as it appears today: (1) the Lion Gates; (2) the Magazine Building now city hall; (3) Magazine Press Building now the police station; (4) Art Institute of the People's University now the Lewis Center.



The Woman's Magazine
published by the
Lewis Publishing
Company in
University City
claimed to have
"the largest paid
subscription ...
in the world."



The fifth floor is devoted to a single room topped by a domed ceiling rising 35 feet from the floor and supported by eight Ionic columns. The elaborate plaster decoration includes a series of identical female figures by Bailey, set in niches along the walls and holding concealed lights. Originally called the ballroom, this space now serves as the University City Council Chamber and Municipal Courtroom.

Lewis incorporated University City in 1906, with himself as mayor. Two years later, he founded the American Woman's League, which was to advance, protect and uplift American womanhood. He held a national convention here in 1910, using the Magazine Building and the nearby Art Academy of the People's University, another project of the league. (The building is now the Lewis Center.) The next year, the league established its own republic. Mrs. Lewis was sworn in as president by Belva Lockwood, who in 1884 had been the first woman to run for President of the United States.

The Lewis empire collapsed in bankruptcy and litigation in 1912. The founder moved to Atascadero, Calif., near San Luis Obispo, where he established another visionary community. He

Robert Pettus



The marble and scagliola lobby of the Magazine Building, the City Hall of University City, centers on a curving staircase flanked by sculptor William Bailey's "lithe maidens."

declared bankruptcy again in 1924 and four years later began a jail term for mail fraud. He died in 1950. University City, however, survived Lewis's departure and soon prospered. The city hall was used for several years by the Orcutt Moving and Storage Company, which called it "The Most Beautiful Storage Plant in America." In 1930, Mayor Eugene Ruth traded it for the old city hall, then located two blocks east.

In its early years, the Magazine Building was visible from Forest Park, and it attracted many visitors from the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. At night, a powerful spotlight operated from the dome; it was restored in 1981 and is still used on special occasions. One of them will be Friday, April 21, when University City welcomes participants at Missouri's 10th annual historic preservation conference with a special tour and reception.
— Esley Hamilton

*Esley Hamilton is a historian/ architectural historian employed by the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation. He is the co-author, with Julius K. Hunter, of **Portland and Westmoreland Places**.*

The American Woman's League

In the spring of 1910, University City was the site for a meeting of approximately 1,000 suffragettes who assembled for the first national convention of the American Woman's League, an organization created by E. G. Lewis in 1908 to promote educational, cultural and business opportunities for women in addition to expanding his publishing business. (See page 1.) Responding to needs expressed by the women's movement at that time, he created an ambitious plan for a network of institutions and businesses to serve women that included a correspondence school, a postal library and savings bank and social service institutions to provide for the homeless and for orphans. By 1910, there were approximately 100,000 members.

"Membership in the League is open to any woman of the Caucasian race..." Lewis proclaimed. The terms were straight forward: either \$52 in cash or \$52 in magazine subscriptions. Lewis promised that half the revenues raised would pay for the magazine and half would go to the league itself. Men could become non-voting members by paying \$20, and benefits were available to all members at no cost.

The most popular benefit was the Peoples University, which had an enrollment of 50,000 correspondence students by 1910. The Beaux-Arts style plan for the campus and civic plaza area can be appreciated today by studying Lewis' elaborate model, which is on display on the ground floor of the University City City Hall (see photo on page 4.) The pottery division of the Art Academy continues to bring international recognition to University City. Lewis assembled a remarkably talented staff from France, England and the United States, and their porcelain wares—often marked "AWL" for the American Woman's League—are prominent in museum collections of American art pottery. The staff included Taxile Doat, Frederick Hurten Rhead and Adelaide Alsop Robineau. The Art Academy building (the only university building realized) is now called the Lewis Center and is used in part by the Washington University School of Fine Art. AWL pottery collected by the University City Historical Society is on display in the public library.

Surplus revenues enabled the league to build 38 chapter houses for its members in 16 states while hundreds more were planned. The St. Louis architectural firm of Helfensteller, Hirsch and Watson designed the five prototypes, which were scaled to

accommodate different-sized communities. All were cruciform in plan and combined stylistic characteristics of the prairie school and arts and crafts movement in both their exterior massing and exterior and interior detailing. All came fully furnished with mission-style furniture, fixtures and carpets for the meeting rooms and included a salesroom for the "Woman's Exchange" where members' handicrafts were sold together with the AWL publications and products from the Art Academy. The chapter houses became social, educational, and cultural centers for their

members and were meant to enable women to acquire some business skills as well. However, bas reliefs above the fireplaces were entitled "Woman's Mission" and idealized woman's role of homemaker and nurturing mother.

While the university, the postal library, and the Women's Exchange were intended to ready women for the workplace and the vote, the reorganization of the league in 1911 into the American Women's Republic was to prepare them for an expanded role in government. The republic was modeled after the United States government. At its first congress held in University City in 1912, Mrs. Belva Lockwood, the republic's attorney general, who had been the first woman to run for president of the United States in the election of 1884, swore Mrs. Mabel Lewis in as its president. E. G. Lewis planned for the American Women's Republic to continue as a separate but equal

organization until women's suffrage was granted and it could merge with the republic of the United States.

While the Peoples University dissolved by 1912 due to the collapse of Lewis's publications empire, enough AWR members followed him to California to found the Colony of Atascadero. In Missouri, the movement for women's suffrage continued, culminating in March 1919 at the Statler Hotel in St. Louis with the founding of the national League of Women Voters at the convention of the American Woman's Suffrage Association. While the convention was in session, the Missouri Senate ratified the joint concurrent resolution endorsing women's suffrage, and by 1920 women had "the vote." — Mary Gass

Mary Henderson Gass is an architect who lives and works in University City. She is the current president of the Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians.



More than 1,000 suffragettes attended the first national convention of the American Woman's League in University City in 1910. Both the Magazine Building (left) and the Art Institute Building (right) were draped in bunting for the occasion.

Courtesy of University City Public Library Archives

Thy Parents' House

Living in a Frank Lloyd Wright Masterpiece

Bette and Ted Pappas were scared beyond belief to ask Frank Lloyd Wright to design a home for them in 1954. So the first thing they did was write the famous architect a letter, enclosing a retainer's fee to show their faith, requesting a small \$25,000 home full of light and privacy. Then, after mailing the letter, they started to worry, especially Bette. The young married couple, both under 35 and about as prosperous as the Plymouth they drove around town, knew they were not anything like most of the modern master's clients: rich, worldly, well-heeled.

It was a few weeks before they received a positive response from Wright—the American architect credited with creating “organic” architecture, a holistic style that integrates man-made buildings with nature—and in the meantime, Ted kept telling Bette that “Wright doesn't design for the common man,” and, “He probably won't do it.” Bette kept telling Ted that, “Wright does design for the common man,” and “He is going to do it.”

I know their conversations almost by heart because Ted and Bette Pappas are my parents, and living in a Frank Lloyd Wright house, one of only two in St. Louis, and one of 600 or so in the world, has had a profound impact on their lives. I can see this in subtle ways—their confident, upright shoulders—and in more overt expressions—their frequent speeches to my brother and sisters and me, telling us that anything is possible in this world if you want it badly enough.

Their house, perched atop a hill near Highway 40, and so well hidden that most people who pass it daily don't notice its existence, is not nearly as big (at 3,000 square feet) as many other Wright homes, some of which could be mistaken for mini-communities. There are no guest houses or servants' quarters attached to it, and no swimming pools or fountains hidden among the four acres of ground. What makes it special to the architects and students who come for tours is that it is one of the last homes Wright designed before his death in 1959—that, and its identity as a “Usonian Automatic.” (Wright coined the term, Usonian Automatic, to describe his 20 or so concrete-block homes scattered across the world. These textured stone structures were supposedly so easy to assemble “a layman could do it.”)

Yet the house is special to my parents for reasons aside from labels. Because they built so much of it themselves, my mother putting in most of the glass windows and my father laying the 200-pound block, parts of their souls seem to be sealed inside the strong walls. They had never

intended to do so much of the labor themselves, but general contractors didn't like complicated designs and geometric angles, among several other things, so most of them quit.

The construction took four years. My parents worked weekends mainly, occasionally taking my brother and sisters and me along to help with odd jobs. Sometimes, if my father was tired from selling insurance during the week and irritated with having to wheel big concrete blocks up a wood ramp out in the country, some 20 miles away from everything, which was just the distance prescribed by Wright, he'd tell my mother that she should have married a different man, perhaps her “precious Mr. Wright.” My mother, who had fallen in love with Wright's work when my parents lived in Wisconsin, and who had begged to have a house by “Mr. Wright” (as she always referred to the late architect, even in casual conversations), never said anything at such times. She just walked over to where my father was standing, next to his chipped green wheelbarrow, and took his hand, squeezing it gently.

After that, my father and his wheelbarrow would come careening up the dirt road to the apple tree, where my twin sister and I were usually perched among the limbs screaming about

the daddy longlegs trying to attack us. Before climbing up to save us and when taking us for wheelbarrow rides, my father would say that the only reason the “friendly spiders” wanted to be near us was because we were the “sweetest, most beautiful five-year-old girls in the world.” We never believed him, but after a while, we stopped asking him to squash every spider.

In 1954, when I was seven, we finally moved in. It would be a lie if I said that back then I appreciated the radical architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright—his great rooms, his overhanging roofs, his abundance of glass, his skylights—works of art all. All I wanted was to live in a regular house, with paintings and wallpaper and pitched roofs so my supposedly best friends wouldn't call me “odd” and huddle in corners whispering when they came to visit. The whispering followed the comments about the uncomfortable furniture—much of it built-in—a common complaint among many who feel the hard corners and straight lines are “too intellectual.”

Over time, I came to appreciate the things my parents, especially my mom, did. Even if my friends didn't like it, there was a lot to be said for a man who could design a structurally sound glass corner wall, one that could support a Mack truck.



Wright had definite ideas about the living-dining room. It was a large space to be used for important activities: socializing, dining. See an exterior photo of the Pappas House in *Issues* January/February 1995.

John Nagel

And for all his daring geometry, Wright, an environmentalist at heart, didn't believe in taking anything away from the land, a conviction that many feel explains why his houses blend in so well with the environment.

Today I can think of a lot of material and recreational pleasures I would have had as a kid if not for the terra-cotta house: a new ten-speed bike, an allowance every week, free summers. Seriously over budget, the house ended up costing four times as much as planned, thanks to the fact that virtually every item was custom-made, including the flat roof. (Once, when a cost estimate for the leaking roof came in at \$12,000, the entire family spent a summer repairing it to keep expenses in the more affordable \$3,000 range.)

But I can also think of many other things I wouldn't have had: peace, harmony, hope. There is something symbolic, and almost mystical, about a house that is never dark, even in the worst thunderstorms. If you live in it long enough, it begins to alter the way you think. What Frank Lloyd Wright gave my parents, and all his clients, was more than architecture: He passed on a brighter, stronger, clearer vision of the world.

If you'd like to learn more, my mom has written a 60-page book, **Frank Lloyd Wright: No Passing Fancy**. It includes photos and information on the project from conceptualization and construction to present, and is available at Webster Groves Bookshop, Washington University Bookstore, Meramec Community College Bookstore, and B Dalton Bookseller. —Cynthia Pappas

Ted and Bette Pappas will also host a special tour of their home for preservationists attending Signs of the Times April 21-23, 1995 in St. Louis County.

preservation issues

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Historic Preservation Program
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Dates to Remember

March is Women's History Month! Check media for local events.

Preserving the Recent Past, March 30-April 1, Chicago. Call (217) 244-7659 for a conference brochure or to register by phone.

Missouri Valley Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians meeting, April 2, Jefferson City. Call Mary Gass (314) 725-0317.

Thirty-Seventh Missouri Conference on History, April 13-15, Jefferson City. Call (314) 751-4717 or 751-4303.

Signs of the Times: Current Issues in Historic Preservation, Missouri's 10th Annual Historic Preservation Conference, April 21-23, St. Louis County Government Center, Clayton. Call (314) 751-7959.

Missouri Alliance for Historic Preservation Meeting, April 22, Clayton. Call (314) 635-6877.

How to Teach with Missouri's Historic Places, a workshop for classroom teachers, April 21-23, Seven Gables Inn, Clayton. Call (314) 751-7959.

Statewide Preservation Planning Meeting, April 23, 9 a.m.-12 noon, St. Louis County Government Center. Call Pat Steele (314) 754-5855.

Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation meeting, May 12, Perryville. For details call Maggie Barnes (314) 751-5365.

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